The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a Teacher (Muallim)

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Teaching is considered to be the mother of all professions. The teacher has remained a symbol of reverence and esteem in almost all the nations. Today teaching has become a proper discipline to be studied. Anyone who pursues a degree in education is taught various methods and techniques of teaching. Educationists used the term pedagogy for the art of teaching.

In the perspective of the art of teaching when we study the life of the Prophet ﷺ we are surprisingly exposed to some of the most effective ways of teaching the world has ever known. The Prophet ﷺ has called himself 'Muallim'. The Arabic term 'Muallim' means 'teacher'. Hazrat Abdullah Bin Amr رضی اللہ عنہ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إنما بعثت معلما۔

'Verily I have been sent as a teacher.'

(Sunan Ibn Majah)

In the present article we discuss a few ways of teaching from the Seerah (life) of the Prophet ﷺ.

Using metaphor

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines metaphor as 'a word or phrase used to describe somebody/something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful'. We find various examples in Hadith where the Prophet ﷺ has taught different things to his companions by using metaphor. For example:

Hadith:

مثل علم لا ينتفع به كمثل كنز لا ينفق منه في سبيل لله۔

'Knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure from which nothing is spent in the Way of Allah.' *(Mishkat-ul-Masabih)*

Hadith:

تعلموا القرآن فاقرأوه فإن مثل القرآن لمن تعلم فقرأ وقام به كمثل جراب محشو مسكا تفوح ريحه على كل مكان ومثل من تعلمه فرقد وهو في جوفه كمثل جراب أوكئ على مسك۔

'Learn and recite the Qur'an, for to one who learns, recites and uses it in prayer at night it is like a bag filled with musk whose fragrance diffuses itself everywhere; and he who learns it and goes to sleep having it within him is like a bag with musk tied up in it.' *(Mishkat-ul-Masabih)*

Hadith:

اليد العليا خير من اليد السفلى واليد العليا هي المنفقة واليد السفلى هي السائلة۔

'The upper hand is better than the lower one, the upper being the one which bestows and the lower the one which begs.' *(Mishkat-ul-Masabih)*

Hadith:

كن في الدنيا كأنك غريب أو عابر سبيل۔

'Be in the world as though you were a stranger or one who is passing through.' *(Mishkat-ul-Masabih)*

1. Explaining the things logically and giving somebody a chance of self-reflection

Hadith:

عن أبي أمامة رضي الله عنه أن فتى شابا أتى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال يا رسول الله ائذن لي بالزنا فأقبل القوم عليه فزجروه وقالوا مه مه فقال ادنه فدنا منه قريبا فقال اجلس فجلس فقال أتحبه لأمك؟ قال لا والله جعلني الله فداك قال ولا الناس يحبونه لأمهاتهم قال أفتحبه لابنتك؟ قال لا والله يا رسول الله جعلني الله فداك قال ولا الناس يحبونه لبناتهم قال أفتحبه لأختك؟ قال لا والله جعلني الله فداك قال ولا الناس يحبونه لأخواتهم قال أفتحبه لعمتك؟ قال لا والله جعلني الله فداك قال ولا الناس يحبونه لعماتهم قال أفتحبه لخالتك؟ قال لا والله جعلني الله فداك قال ولا الناس يحبونه لخالاتهم قال فوضع يده عليه وقال اللهم اغفر ذنبه وطهر قلبه وأحصن فرجه قال فلم يكن بعد ذلك الفتى يلتفت إلى شيء۔

Hazrat Abu Umamah رضی الله عنہ narrated that a young man came to the Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم and said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Give me permission to commit Zina (unlawful sex).' The people surrounded him and rebuked him, saying, 'Stop! Stop!' But the Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Come close.' The young man came to him, and he said, 'Sit down' so he sat down. The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Would you like it (unlawful sex) for your mother?' He said, 'No, by Allah, may I be ransomed for you.' The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Neither do the people like it for their mothers.' The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Would you like it for your daughter?' He said, 'No, by Allah, may I be ransomed for you.' The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Neither do the people like it for their daughters.' The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Would you like it for your sister?' He said, 'No, by Allah, may I be ransomed for you.' The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Neither do the people like it for their sisters.' The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Would you like it for your paternal aunt?' He said, 'No, by Allah, O Allah's Messenger! May I be ransomed for you.' The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Neither do the people like it for their paternal aunts.' The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Would you like it for your maternal aunt?' He said, 'No, by Allah, O Allah's Messenger! May I be ransomed for you.' The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Neither do the people like it for their maternal aunts.' Then the Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم put his hand on him and said, 'O Allah, forgive his sin, purify his heart and guard his chastity.' After that the young man never paid attention to anything of that nature. *(Tafseer Ibn Kathir; Musnad Ahmad)*

2. Using body language and illustrating with gestures

Hadith:

عن أبي بكرة رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ألا أنبئكم بأكبر الكبائر؟ قلنا بلى يا رسول الله قال الإشراك بالله وعقوق الوالدين وكان متكئا فجلس فقال ألا وقول الزور وشهادة الزور۔

Hazrat Abd-ur-Rahman Bin Abi Bakrah رضی الله عنہ narrated that his father said: The Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said, 'Should I inform you about the greatest of the great sins?' We said, 'Yes, O Allah's Messenger!' He said, 'To join others in worship with Allah and to be undutiful to one's parents.' *He was reclining, then he sat up and said*; 'And I warn you against false testimony and false speech.' *(Sahih Muslim)*

Hadith:

عن أبي موسى الأشعري رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم المؤمن للمؤمن كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضًا وشبك بين أصابعه.

Hazrat Abu Musa Ashari رضى الله عنہ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, 'A believer is for a believer as a structure, each supporting the other.' *The Prophet interlaced his fingers while saying this. (Sahih Muslim)*

3. Using humour based on truth

Hadith:

عن أنس بن مالك رضي الله عنه أن رجلا استحمل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال إني حاملك على ولد ناقة فقال يا رسول الله ما أصنع بولد الناقة؟ فقال صلى الله عليه وسلم وهل تلد الإبل إلا النوق؟

Hazrat Anas Bin Malik رضى الله عنہ narrated that a person requested the Prophet ﷺ that he be given a conveyance. The Prophet ﷺ replied, 'The baby of a camel shall be given to you.' The person said, 'What shall I do with the baby of a camel O Messenger of Allah?' (I want one for a conveyance). The Prophet ﷺ replied, 'Isn't every camel the baby of a camel?' *(Shama'il Tirmidhi)*

Hadith:

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال قالوا يا رسول الله إنك تداعبنا قال إني لا أقول إلا حقا.

Hazrat Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنہ narrated that the companions of the Prophet ﷺ asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, you joke with us (sometimes).' The Prophet ﷺ replied, 'Yes, I do not say but the truth.' *(Shama'il Tirmidhi)*

Conclusion:

We mentioned above a few examples of how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught his students (companions رضى الله عنهم). For those who are in the profession of teaching there is much to study and learn from the Seerah of the Prophet ﷺ. In fact, the world has never seen the students like the students of the Prophet ﷺ. The degree of love, obedience and respect which they had for their teacher, the Prophet ﷺ, is truly incomparable.

Finally, the Seerah of the Prophet ﷺ is a complete code of life and the gateway to success in this world and the world hereafter. The Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

'There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.' *(Surah Al-Ahzab 33:21)*

وما توفيقى الا بالله العلى العظيم

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